

IN THE CLAIMS

*Please cancel claim 18 without prejudice or disclaimer.*

*Please amend the claims as follows:*

1. (twice amended). A method for automatically managing energy cost using metering data

and pricing data, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving metering data from a utility meter, wherein the metering data is  
electronically transmitted from the utility meter;

receiving pricing data electronically over a network, wherein the pricing data  
is associated with a plurality of sources of power;

forecasting a forecast load based on the received metering data from the utility  
meter; and

determining an optimal consumption decision based on the received pricing  
data and the forecast load, wherein the consumption decision  
selects one of the plurality of sources of power to thereby  
reduce utility costs.

21 (amended). The method of claim 1, further including automatically implementing the  
optimal consumption decision, wherein the automatically implementing includes  
automatically providing power from [one or more] at least one of the plurality of  
sources of power to the customer based upon the optimal consumption decision.

22 (amended). A system for automatically managing energy cost [using metering data and  
pricing data], the system comprising:

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a server communicating with at least one utility meter, wherein said server is configured to record [for recording and transmitting the] metering data received from said utility meter via a network;

[at least one server; and

a network, ] and wherein the [at least one] server is further configured [to receive the metering data from the at least one utility meter,] to receive [the] pricing data from each of a plurality of sources of power from the network, and to determine an optimal consumption decision [and to transmit the optimal consumption decision to a customer], wherein the optimal consumption decision selects one of the plurality of sources of power to thereby reduce utility costs.

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27 (amended). The system of claim 22, wherein the [at least one] server comprises [at least one]a central server and [at least one] a regional server.

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28 (amended). The system of claim 27, wherein the [at least one] central server is configured to receive the pricing data from the network, to receive the metering data from the [at least one] regional server, to determine the optimal consumption decision and to transmit the optimal consumption decision to the at least one regional server.

29 (amended). The system of claim 27, wherein the [at least one] regional server is configured to receive the metering data from the [at least one] utility meter, to transmit the metering data to the [at least one] central server, to receive the optimal

consumption decision from the [at least one] central server and to transmit the optimal consumption decision to the customer.

*Please add the following new claims:*

32. The method of claim 1 wherein said forecasting step comprises generating said forecast load based upon historical data from a prior time period.
33. The method of claim 1 wherein said forecasting step comprises creating a current load shape from said metering data.
34. The method of claim 33 wherein said forecasting further comprises comparing the current load shape to a load shape from a prior time period to determine the forecast load.
35. A method of reducing utility costs, the method comprising the steps of:  
obtaining consumption data from each of a plurality of utility meters;  
storing said consumption data in a database;  
receiving pricing information from each of a plurality of sources of power;  
processing said consumption data and said pricing information to produce a consumption and purchasing plan, wherein said consumption and purchasing plan selects one of said plurality of sources of power to thereby reduce utility costs.

36. The method of claim 35 wherein said plurality of sources of power comprise off-grid sources of power.
37. The method of claim 35 wherein said computing step comprises evaluating non-energy costs in producing said consumption and purchase plan.
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38. The method of claim 37 wherein said non-energy costs comprise labor costs.
39. The method of claim 37 wherein said non-energy costs comprise equipment costs.
40. The method of claim 35 wherein said plurality of sources comprise on-site generation of power.
41. The method of claim 35 wherein said plurality of sources comprise a demand-side management system (DSM).
42. The method of claim 37 wherein said plurality of sources comprise alternate energy sources.